

To: wtc@nist.gov
Subject: Comments on the NIST report into the collapse of the World Trade Centre Towers
From: John.Dowling@corusgroup.com

Dear Sir/Madam

I have the following comments to make on the above report:

The recommendation for a move towards design against progressive collapse is laudable.

The emphasis on moving away from dependence on the standard fire test towards analysis based on building burnout is also to be applauded.

The report also places emphasis on the need to move towards performance based approaches for the design of tall buildings in fire. It gives the strong impression that such approaches are in their infancy and that a great deal of research must be carried out before performance based methods can be widely used. I do not believe this to be universally true. A great deal of the necessary research and development has already been carried out, particularly in the United Kingdom where large scale fire testing in buildings has been going on for over ten years. Advanced analysis tools exist to assess whole frame behaviour in fire and these are being widely used in prestigious projects. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to look at the experiences in the UK and to learn from these. I am concerned that, otherwise, a great deal of work may be duplicated.

Your recommendations (6 & 10) for development of standards and methods for testing of fire protection for extreme events is welcome. However, this has also been addressed in the UK and two of our major fire protection manufacturers (Leighs paints & Caico) have carried out explosion tests on their products. I urge you to contact both organisations and I am happy to supply contact details if requested.

I feel that there may be little value in following the detail of Recommendation 11 (the use of high performance materials in fire). Previous research has shown that these materials are effective only in low intensity or low duration fires, not the type of high intensity, burnout fires which we saw at the World Trade Centre.

Yours sincerely

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